

Part of the Solution: Engaging Youth in Addressing Ohio's Opioid Crisis

Carol A. Smathers, MS, MPH & Theresa M. Ferrari, PhD

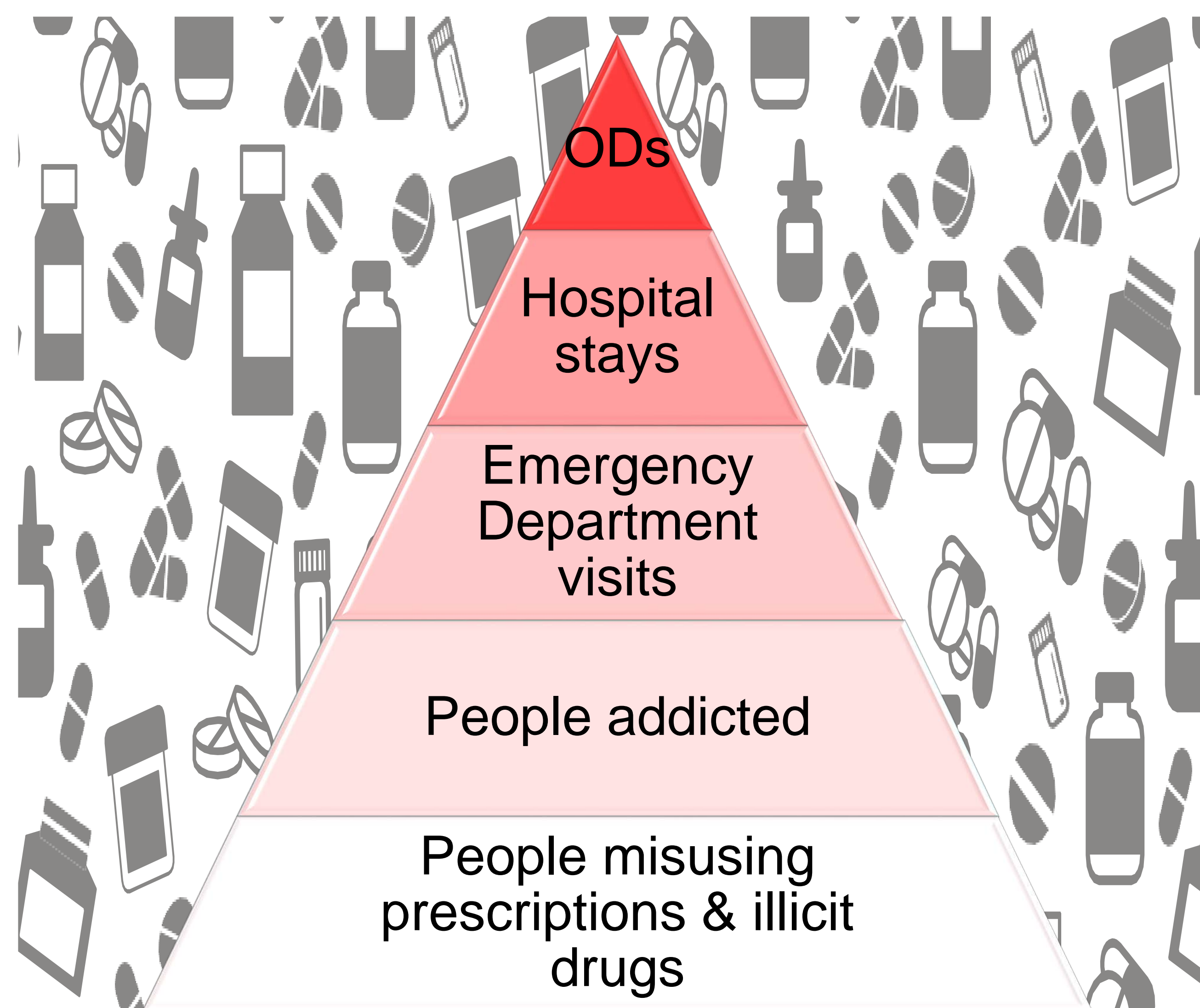


SITUATION

Ohio is facing an alarming public health crisis related to opioid overdose deaths.

- In 2016, 4,149 Ohioans died of an unintentional drug overdose, fueled in large part by an increase in fentanyl-related overdose deaths.
- The 2016 overdose death toll is 36% greater than 2015, when Ohio led the nation. 2017 is on target to outpace 2016.
- Past misuse of prescription opioids is the strongest risk factor for starting heroin use, with 3 out of 4 new heroin users reporting abuse of prescription opioids before using heroin.

Overdose Deaths: The Tip of the Iceberg



The further from the "tip," the greater the number of people affected. In addition to deaths, overdoses--both prescription and illicit--are responsible for parallel increasing trends in nonfatal emergency department admissions. According to a report from Ohio State's Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, the annual cost of opiate abuse, addiction, and overdoses to Ohio is estimated to be between \$6.6 billion to \$8.8 billion.

OHIO 4-H HEALTH HEROES Medicine Cabinet Project

Armed with the facts about opioid use, and a desire to make a difference, a group of Ohio 4-H teens sat around a table during the action planning portion of the 2017 National Youth Summit on Healthy Living. From those discussions emerged what is now dubbed the "medicine cabinet display."



The portable display, which resembles a bathroom wall, was designed to attract attention and engage participants. This display is a tool to help raise awareness and educate the public about the opioid crisis and to initiate conversations about opioid misuse and its implications.

Held on December 2, 2017, teens and adults who work with them attended the Hope for Ohio: Teen Forum on Ohio's Opioid Crisis.



Teen Forum on Ohio's Opioid Crisis

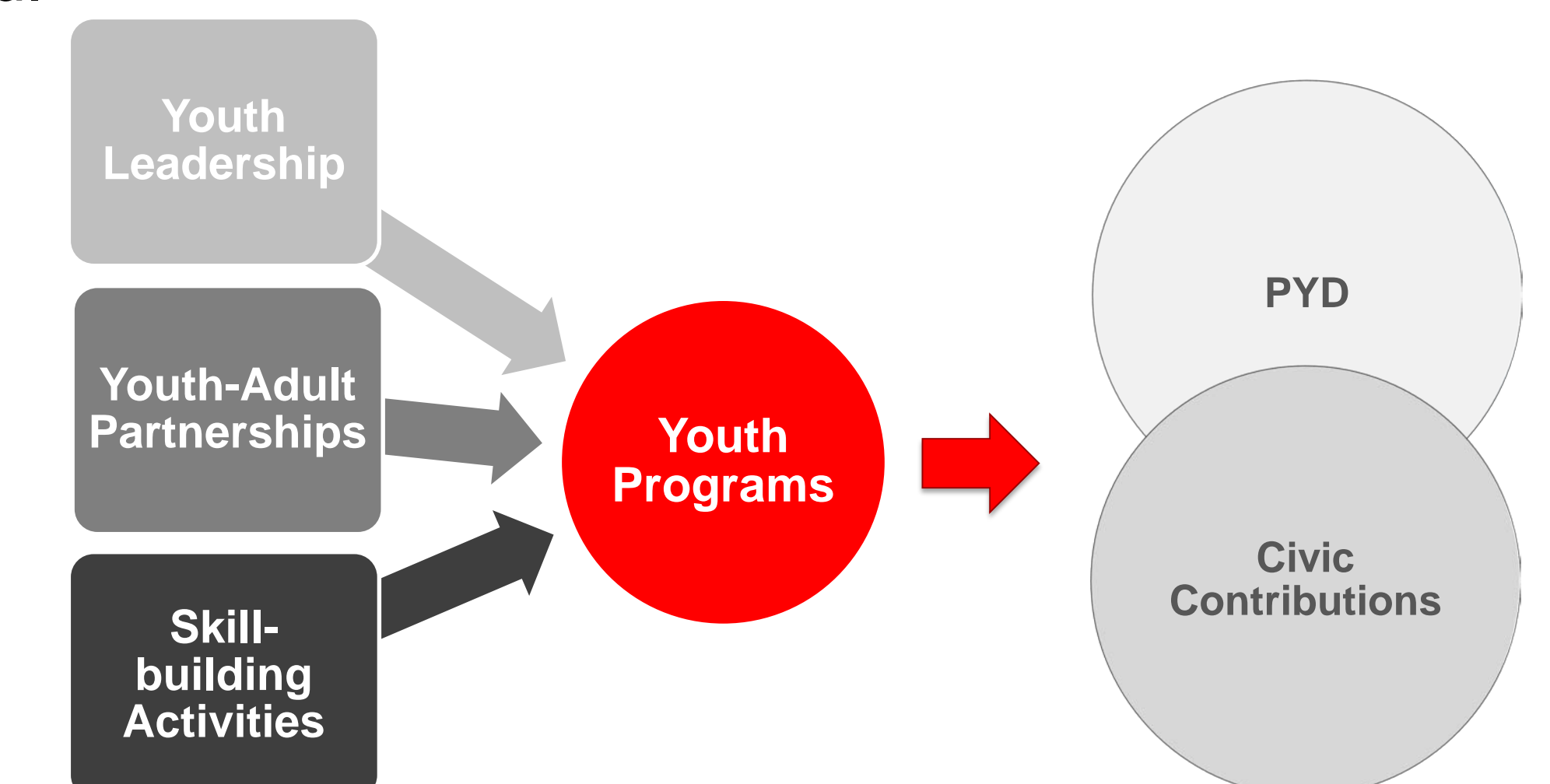
"I learned how to share the drug awareness information with my friends and family and I will speak up."



ENGAGING YOUTH

Positive Youth Development in Action

Perhaps more important than the display and the forum themselves is the process of engaging teens in their creation and implementation. Research shows that youth programs offering the "Big Three" elements are those that promoted positive youth development (PYD). When these elements are in place, program outcomes are more likely to be achieved.



Positive youth development is operationalized as the Five C's:

Confidence **Competence** **Character**
Caring **Connection**

When the Five C's are in place, they lead to the sixth C – **contribution**. Youth who achieve these outcomes also have a reduced incidence of risk behavior.

Resources

- Generation Rx
- pHARMING Effects*, Youth to Youth International
- Practical Toolkit for Faith and Community Leaders*, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

References

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

smathers.14@osu.edu

ferrari.8@osu.edu

www.ohio4h.org/healthyliving